

A Cause For Concern

Take two teen-agers and Quantity X, an unknown, and you've got more than just an algebraic riddle.

The two teen-agers are girls 13 and 14. "Quantity X" is a bottle of seconal tablets, left carelessly within easy access.

The result: a near-tragic episode which could have marred two lives, or at least have left long-lasting scars of experience.

This is not a remote case in another city or county. It happened Monday in Torrance.

The girls, left alone on a quiet summer day, had little to keep themselves occupied. They found a bottle of 20 physician-prescribed narcotic sleeping tablets used by one girl's father.

One girl experimentally gulped four pills, the other five. One girl collapsed unconscious, the other staggered into the street in a semi-conscious stupor.

Passers-by notified police, and the girls were hospitalized in time to prevent lasting physical injury.

Police say the case was not "accidental." The girls deliberately and with premeditation took narcotic pills known commonly as "red devils," a habit-forming drug in wide use by narcotic addicts.

The girls are no longer hospitalized, and the case is all but closed.

But there still hangs a question: how did it happen? There is no stock answer. The case, though, should prompt each parent to examine his child's upbringing, to make sure (or rather to partially insure) that his child will not fall victim to the same misfortunes of "curiosity."

Good News For Drivers

Torrance motorists got plenty of good news this week.

They learned they will have a 4.6 mile stretch of San Diego Freeway completed and ready to use by Sept. 1, and that the California Highway Patrol will take over law enforcement thereon.

There's no disputing the "good news" factor of a new, 4-lane superhighway. But there may be some question to the suggestion that CHP law enforcement is better than any other kind of regulatory measure.

It's this way: The proven effectiveness of California's Highway Patrol cannot help but make freeway driving safer. The painstaking process of officer selection, the arduous and all-inclusive training program, the constant upgrading of methods and procedures — all these are the aggregate factors making California's highways safer for its mushrooming number of motorists.

Throughout the nation, the California Highway Patrol is recognized as being one of the best-trained, best-equipped law enforcement agencies operating today.

When a California Highway Patrolman investigates an accident — perhaps your accident — he is calling upon many hundred hours of specialized training in accident investigation.

When he checks an overweight trailer or truck, he does so because experience has shown that such infractions cause accidents.

When he issues a citation for speed, reckless driving or the other common violations, he knows he may be saving a life, perhaps yours.

And so it is good news that the California Highway Patrol will take over the San Diego Freeway. Let's hope its job is an easy one.

Error Margin 'Too Big'

In school, a mark of 95 per cent or higher is worth a top grade in any examination.

On the highway, that 5 per cent margin for error may prove fatal.

"Most drivers could honestly answer 'yes' if you asked them if they were safe operators. Most of the time — 95 per cent of the time — they are," California Highway Patrol Commissioner Bradford M. Crittenden said.

"But that other five per cent, those few brief moments when your attention

is diverted, when irritation prompts a foolish move, or when you carelessly violate the law, this is the danger area.

"Driving demands a grade of 100 per cent. It demands 100 per cent attention, 100 per cent compliance with law, and 100 per cent control of yourself and your car.

"A grade of anything less than 100 means you flunk. On the highway, a failing grade too often means death," the commissioner said.

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EDITORIAL PAGE

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Bat Rabies Danger Told by Physician

K. H. Sutherland, M.D., Los Angeles County Health Officer

Rabies from the bite of an infected bat is now recognized as a danger to human beings in many parts of the United States, including California. This was emphasized by an episode that recently occurred in the mountainous recreation area of San Bernardino County, when a vacationing teenager from Torrance was bitten on the finger by a stray bat. Upon examination at the State Laboratory, the bat was found to be rabid.

As long ago as 1911, it was discovered in Brazil that the blood feeding or vampire bat was a rabies carrier and was transmitting the disease to livestock. Through the years that followed, bat rabies was thought to be confined to certain tropical and subtropical countries in South America and to Mexico.

Bat rabies was not suspected in the United States until 1951, when health officials noted that a Texas resident died of rabies following the bite of a bat. A similar incident occurred in Florida in 1953, and on this occasion the bat was caught and the first identification of bat rabies in this country was made. Since then, approximately 350 rabid bats involving at least 24 species have been found in 36 states. None are blood feeding.

The first rabid bat in California was discovered in Sonoma County in 1954, and, through May 1961, some 53 rabid bats of 10 different species had been found in 23 of the State's 58 counties. No one type of area is favored. Rabid bats inhabit mountain, valley, desert, and coastal regions of the State.

In all, 13 persons (3 adults and 10 children) in California are known to have been bitten by rabid bats, which has resulted in the death of one adult. All but one of these individuals exposed themselves to the disease by handling bats which showed signs of illness or erratic behavior. Bats may make unprovoked attacks, however, and three such incidents have occurred in three different California counties (Santa Clara, Madera, and Ventura).

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SMALL CREATURES

Bats are small creatures with bodies no more than two to four inches in length. The membrane that enables them to fly is attached to elongated fingers and shorter hind limbs and tail, and these act something like the ribs of an umbrella. They are active only at night unless disturbed or sick, and their natural radar equipment enables them to navigate in the dark and to catch their food without running into obstacles. They live in trees, caves, old barns, hollow walls, deserted buildings, attics and the like.

There are millions of bats in the United States and most of them are insect eaters, though some eat fruits and other foods. Until this time at least, bats have been considered beneficial to man because they consume many harmful insects. The vampire bat of South America has never been found on the North America continent, apparently preferring the warmth of the tropics.

VIRUS CARRIERS

Scientists now affirm that bats, some apparently healthy, are carriers of the rabies virus. Between 1955 and 1961, there were 38 human deaths from rabies in this country, and four of them were caused by rabid bats.

The possibility that two of these four cases resulted from aerosol or droplet exposure in Texas caves, where there was a dense bat population, is presently under consideration.

It is now known that the incubation period of rabies in man (the time from infection to the appearance of symptoms) is much shorter when the rabies virus is transmitted by wildlife than when the infection is incurred from domestic animals. Since antirabies vaccine is slow in developing an active immunity to the disease, a much higher risk is therefore associated with exposure to rabid wildlife than to rabid domestic pets. However, the administration of hyperimmune rabies antiserum has been found useful in prolonging the incubation period, thereby permitting time for the antirabies vaccine to build up immunity in the body.

BEST PROTECTION

Individuals can best protect themselves against the bite of a rabid bat by leaving them alone. No one should ever handle a bat that can be caught. Any bat seen in the daytime should be regarded with suspicion unless some disturbance has driven it out of its hiding place. It is also well to keep in mind that even seemingly healthy bats may be carriers of the rabies virus.

Anyone bitten by a bat should receive prompt first aid treatment which consists of thorough washing of the wound with plenty of soap and water, and medical attention should be sought at once so that any necessary antirabies treatment may be started. Whenever possible, the bat should be caught and turned over to health officials for laboratory examination.

— Letters to the Editor —

Editor:

The suggested "verbal spanking" by Mrs. McVey in her recent letter to the editor about the Torrance schools' failure to keep the public informed on double sessions and bond issues is only partially deserved. Many of us tend to put grease on the squeaky wheel, and when everything about an issue such as this seems to be going smoothly, the wheel doesn't get lubricated. This is probably the reason we didn't stand on the street corner over two year ago and pass out handbills to announce that the school building program had temporarily caught up with the population increase, thus enabling us to go off of double sessions.

Some of the blame can be placed on the reader-interest of newspaper subscribers. Stories on murders, robberies, vandalism, etc., evidently took priority in the interest of readers in 1959 and '60 when several articles did appear announcing that it was no longer necessary to hold double sessions in Torrance.

I doubt that this letter will reach all of the 100,000 people or the 40 thousand registered voters in Torrance that you spoke of, but here are the facts you asked for:

We have enough classroom space under construction or planned to take care of the slightly over 28,000 pupils presently enrolled, plus the 800 new elementary and 800 new high school students who will be entering school this fall. However, our special services and research people con-

servatively predict (their predictions have proved to be 99 percent accurate over the last five years) that by 1965 we can expect to enroll 4,000 to 5,000 new students. This figure does not include any new major housing developments or rezoning of property to residential.

We have enough money from the 1958 building bond authorization to keep up with the normal school population growth for the next year or so, but without additional funds authorized in the bond election on September 18, the building program will come to a grinding halt. If this happens it is fact that the increased enrollments destined to hit us will undoubtedly force the return to double sessions, and could also have curtailing effects upon the rest of the instructional program.

A factual comment about tax rates — each year —

part of the tax money paid by Torrance property holders is allowed by law to be spent to pay back the money borrowed from bond holders to build our schools. The law, however, protects the taxpayer by stipulating that only 10 percent of the assessed valuation may be levied and spent for this purpose. Since we have, for some time, in Torrance, been bonded to this 10 percent capacity the voters are only being asked to allow the continuance of the sale of building bonds after the 1958 authorization runs out early next year. Therefore, the new \$8,000,000 bond authorization if passed will not increase taxes.

If these facts alone can reach all of the people of Torrance, it is agreed, there will be no need for us to talk of tents for kids or tepees for teachers in 1965.

Lysle R. Albro

Rates Lowered For Veterans

World War I veterans 65 or older holding USGLI term insurance policies may now convert to a lower-cost form of insurance as the result of a bill signed into law by President Kennedy on Wednesday, July 25, Mort Webster, manager of VA's Southern California Regional Office, announced today.

The new plan of insurance, called "Special Endowment at Age 96," primarily provides death protection only. The premium, which remains level throughout the life of the policy, is lower than the premium for the term policy which is being

exchanged. Webster warned that not all holders of USGLI term policies should make the change, those disabled should keep their original term policies which provide a monthly income in the event of total permanent disability while at the same time waiving the insurance premium.

At time of exchange a provision for premium waiver in case of total permanent disability may be added to the new policy at an extra premium.

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